



## Implementation Challenges of the University Gender Policy: Evidences from a Nigerian Public University

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### ABSTRACT

This study assessed the level of the implementation of the Obafemi Awolowo University's gender policy and identified the challenges encountered in the process. It determined whether the implementation strategy is able to actualize the policy's goal of achieving 70:30 male/female participation rates in employment and in leadership positions. The level of staff awareness of the policy was also investigated. Data were derived from in-depth interviews with purposively selected members of staff who were stakeholders in the implementation process of the gender policy such as: past and present Heads of Departments, Deans of Faculties, Provosts of Colleges, and Directors of Institutes and Centers. Secondary data on the status of women in academic and leadership positions were derived from the Planning, Budgeting and Monitoring Unit of the university. This study found that the implementation of the gender policy commenced after its promulgation in 2009 and was sustained for just a couple of years. The process slowed down thereafter due to deeply entrenched patriarchal conservatism, change in the composition of university management that focused less on gender issues, reduced political will, gaps in sensitization and awareness creation of the policy, lack of gender equity network and gender equity implementation committee to facilitate the implementation process, inadequate funds and poor human resource to execute the policy's action plans. Also, most Heads of Departments, Deans and other stakeholders did not have copies of the policy and could not utilize it. Lack of effective monitoring and evaluation frameworks were significant implementation challenges. The study concluded that a strong political will as well as a new shift to a more transformative, proactive and nuanced approach by the university stakeholders and management is required to facilitate the implementation of the gender policy.

**Keywords:** Gender Policy, Implementation Challenges, University, Nigeria.

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### INTRODUCTION

Gender is a germane issue and a differentiating and structural feature of the society and organizations. Gender inequality which pervades the work environment and the Nigerian university system has become a dominant theme and major global concern in treaties and declarations. Historically, men have dominated and exercised power in higher education systems, while women have remained less visible and disproportionately represented in various ranks within academia. Little attention has been given to the lack of women in leadership positions in universities. The Nigerian university system is replete with gender inequalities, discrimination and incidence of sexual harassment, yet gender concern is often not seen as a priority in the context of what is regarded as more pressing problems in the University System [1].

The gender gap in leadership positions in Nigerian universities is wide and evident in the universities' Council, Senate, Departmental, Faculty and Administrative levels. For instance, female professors in Nigerian Universities when compared to their male counterparts constitute just 15.45 percent of the professorial cadre, 16.9 percent of them are members of University Governing Councils while 18.3 percent are Deans. Also, female Vice Chancellors are rare and just 16 of them have occupied this position since the inception of the university system in Nigeria over 60 years ago [2]. Reports concerning the status of women in leadership positions in academia in most other parts of the world indicate that they are few. For instance, Hong Kong has had no female Vice-Chancellor, while Kuwait has just 2 percent of female Vice-Chancellors. This is followed by Japan (2.3%), India (3%), and Turkey (7%). Europe has 13 percent representation of female Vice-Chancellors; United Kingdom has 14 percent females, while Sweden has 43 percent. It was not until 2016 that Oxford produced its first female Vice-Chancellor. Malaysia and Australia reported 15 percent and 18 percent of Vice-Chancellor positions held by women. A high number of women is noticeable in East Asian universities, but most of them are unable to break the ceiling to the top leadership positions, [3, 4].

The urgent need to correct the inequalities has now become a major global concern that is reshaping knowledge production and development strategies. It is a paradigm that now occupies a central stage in achieving sustainable development [5].

The quest to bridge the gender gap is sweeping across both the public and private institutions and the sustainable development Goal 5 emphasizes amongst others, the need for women's full participation in public life and in decision-making positions. It is a current fundamental issue by the United Nations that has to be accommodated in all areas of social interaction [6]. Subsequently, various United Nations Treaties and Conventions have addressed these issues and most countries are keying into it. This has become expedient because the underrepresentation of women in leadership has detrimental ripple effects across institutions, communities and countries and this is what this study tries to mitigate in Obafemi Awolowo University, Nigeria. It has been severally emphasized that having women's voices present in decision making is important because it brings the desired diversity into the work environment. Also, their presence in leadership roles in universities contributes to positive and unique experiences which the university will not have under gender-homogenous leadership. Their presence provides a diverse perspective on a variety of educational problems and through their participation in leadership positions they become agents of change in fighting the gender disparity battle around the world. [7]. consequently, academic institutions need to be aware and actively combat unconscious bias by engaging women in leadership positions.

Nigeria is currently faced with the challenge of reforming its institutions and ensuring that they are guided and administered with equity principles. In view of this, government as well as various institutions and organisations are evolving proactive laws and policies that can close the gender gap [2].

In line with this and in response to various International Treaties of which Nigeria is a signatory, Obafemi Awolowo University developed a gender policy in 2009 as an instrument that would promote gender equity and facilitate the process of mainstreaming gender into the university administration, teaching and research activities. The gender policy is shaped by the university's strategic plan, which was generated through a participatory and interactive process involving different units in the university [8]. The policy is an affirmative action initiative predicated on human rights and equity principles aimed at major structural changes which would lead to the better utilization of human and material resources as well as address the problem of imbalance in the various units of the university. Furthermore, the policy is focused on changing the cultural perception of gender roles and bridging the gender gap in the composition of academic staff and their participation in leadership positions [8]. Unfortunately, in spite of the enactment of the gender policy over ten years ago, its contents have not been successfully articulated and gender inequality persists in the university system due to implementation challenges. Therefore, actualizing the contents of the university gender policy that facilitates women's full representation in leadership positions and working to overcome the challenges that constitute a barrier to achieving this is timely and urgent.

This study therefore assessed the level of implementation of the university gender policy in terms of its capacity to advance academic women into leadership positions in Obafemi Awolowo University. It also identified the challenges encountered in the implementation process that has hindered the document from advancing women into leadership positions in the university. There is need for more attention to be paid on the implementation of the policy in order to ensure gender dimensions and equality in the university system. When both men and women work together in leadership roles, organizations thrive.

### **Obafemi Awolowo University and the University Gender Policy**

Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife Nigeria was established in 1962 and it is one of the most physically well planned and beautiful campuses in Africa [8]. At inception, very few women were employed because of the existence of patriarchy and the belief that paid employment was the preserve of men. The women who were employed were mainly support staff, because gender roles as constructed in African societies foster female subordination. With time, liberal principles were embraced by the founding partners in matters of administration and governance and engraved into the system tolerable gender principles in matters of students' and staff welfare. These included preference for females in the allocation of on-campus accommodation, employment of wives of staff and special welfare concern for widows (for example, the gesture of retaining work and accommodation for widows on campus). Although these intentions were attempts to reduce gender gap, they were ad hoc rather than planned actions for change and was unable to address inherent structural inequities within the university system [5].

The situation analysis report of the university carried out in 2002 showed wide gender disparities in student enrolments, staff employment and in duty allocation. Men occupied strategic administrative and academic positions and controlled the decision-making machineries in the university. Female participation in decision-making in the university was found to be limited. For instance in the university senate the ratio was 19 males to 1 female and the few female professors hardly contested for Deanship positions in the faculties. In 2004, of the 93 Heads of Academic Departments,

only 12 (12.9%) were women and majority of them were in the position of acting Heads of Departments. On the whole, the participation of women in decision-making in the university was very low [2].

Obafemi Awolowo University, Nigeria, like many other higher education institutions in Africa, has recognized that its journey into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century can only be accelerated by building a congenial learning environment where the talents of men and women are equitably harnessed and judiciously used [5]. The university gender policy was therefore enacted in 2009 to promote gender equity by mainstreaming gender into university administration, teaching and research activities. This was to ensure organizational effectiveness and efficiency. The policy summarized the areas that are prejudicial on the basis of gender in the university and proposed appropriate strategies to ameliorate them. Such areas amongst others include ensuring 70:30 male/female ratio in the employment of academic staff and their representation in committees and decision making positions such as Heads of Units and Departments. This was to be actualized through the provision of incentives to gender compliant departments and units as well as by ensuring that all data emanating from the various units and departments are gender disaggregated.

### **Implementation Process and the Challenges of the University Gender Policy**

Making the University Gender policy functional requires everybody's efforts as well as the application of the principles of accountability, comparability networking and cultural values [8]. The policy document indicates that all units of the university are accountable for implementation of the gender policy. In view of this, the university is expected to create organizational culture that support gender equality and invest in transforming its structure to support gender equity standards such that its work practices, structures, means and values embraces gender equity standards. The policy makes provision for gender equity responsibilities across the university such that staff in management and supervisory positions accept responsibility for gender equity policies and practices. One of the strategies for achieving this was to give inducements to units and the individuals that are gender compliant as a means of facilitating the implementation of the policy.

Orpins et al [9] found that implementing gender policies in universities and workplaces is a complex process because of the loose relationship between the university and its departments. They noted that while most policies are decided at the university level, the cooperation of departments is needed but most did not always comply. This being the case, Obafemi Awolowo University can draw lessons from the toolkit developed by the workplace gender equality agency in Australia which provides a framework and roadmap for assessing the development of a whole-of-organization approach to gender equality. These include: building leaders' knowledge of business benefits of gender equality and what gender equality entails, what progress may look like for the organizations, stakeholders' engagement, leadership accountability, communicating a diversity strategy, measurement and reporting, policies and processes, supply chain, gender composition, gender pay equity, flexibility, talent pipeline, leader and manager capability and gender inclusive culture. This approach place ultimate responsibility and accountability for gender equality on organizational leaders. It recognizes the need to address gender equality as a strategic whole of organization issue. It is sophisticated enough to allow identification and diagnosis of various problem areas, while simultaneously lending itself to practical and intuitive solutions. It recognizes gender policy as every employee's responsibility but leaders and managers are routinely accountable and evaluated [10]. It should be noted that an overarching gender equality strategy is important to ensure that discreet initiatives are complementary and working towards the overall goals of promoting gender equality in the workplace. There is however no single 'off-the-shelf' strategy that organizations might adopt [11].

In Obafemi Awolowo University, the process of implementing the university gender policy involved using gender analysis framework to provide a better understanding of gender issues and for measuring the impact of the policy. In support of this, Lee-Gosellin [12] affirmed the need for universities to have knowledge of gender analysis framework as an instrument for facilitating the implementation process. In addition, Kantola and Ikavalko [13] noted that the university must have disaggregated records of staff and students by gender which would enhance the preparation of reports and documentations of gender activities and progress. This is vital in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation process. In Obafemi Awolowo University, the Centre for Gender and Social Policy studies of the university from where the policy evolved facilitates this process. The Centre produces annual reports on gender related issues and programmes such as the awareness creation workshops on gender issues organized for both staff and students, provision of scholarships and conference travel grants for staff which is sponsored by the Carnegie Foundation of New York etc. Some of these strategies yielded positive results, despite the observed male dominance and the existing patriarchal institutional structure and culture. For instance, the number of female professors rose from 2.7 percent in 2009 when the policy was promulgated to 7.7 percent in 2018. Also, the total number of female academic staff increased from 19.8 percent in 2009 to 25.8 percent in 2018 [14]. The various implementation processes and strategies were however only sustained for just a couple of years after the promulgation of the policy in 2009, but slowed down thereafter due to a myriad of factors This perhaps supports Guillen's [15] argument that promotion of gender mainstreaming is repetitive and leading to nowhere. He observed that its content is always evaporated by those opposing change, and noted that it is not an adequate tool to dismantle the patriarchal state in Public Administration. He noted that the existence of conflicting principles, interests,

values norms and objectives which create a paradoxical clash contribute to this. This implies that bureaucratic principles demand policy implementation and patriarchal principles demand evaporation due to the existence of norms that protect male privileges and power which resist gender changes. The existence of gender bias in institutions can therefore lead to reluctance to implement the contents in gender policies [16].

In view of this, Waylen [17] noted that the structural institutional dynamics are fundamental questions in order to understand how change that accommodates gender equity initiatives work. He affirmed that in order to understand this kind of change, one needs to focus on power struggles for the distribution of resources and the definition of rules that take place in institutions, as well as identify the gap between implementation and compliance with those rules. Understanding the gap between rules, their interpretation and implementation by several actors is also relevant. Perhaps this is why the gender policy in Obafemi Awolowo University Nigeria encountered series of implementation challenges a few years after its initial successful take off. One of such major challenge encountered in the implementation of the gender policy was the bottleneck of non-functional gender equity and gender implementation committees mandated with the responsibility of ensuring the full implementation of the gender policy. This was because membership of these major committees was attached to specific positions such as that of the office of the Vice Chancellor, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Provost, Deans, Directors etc. Bottlenecks arise if any of the incumbents is opposed to gender equity principles. Also, the implementation slows down if the occupants of these positions are changed and the new ones have to be sensitized all over again and exposed to the skills of the implementation process. In Obafemi Awolowo University however, the absence of an effective internal gender equity network allowed gender inequities to flourish due to lack of knowledge about the opportunities involved and the inability to draw university's management attention to such inequities.

University management and leadership is basically a driver of the implementation of the gender policy because of their capacity to manage and distribute funds. Hence, Briere, Lee-Gosellin and Hawo [12] affirmed the need for management to be proactive toward achieving gender balanced status and that leaders should be encouraged to be a part of the policy implementation process because their powers and control of organizational resources advance women into leadership positions. They noted that unless leaders appreciate how numerous dimensions of equality affect the performance and well-being of the organizations, they will not be able to introduce measures that prevent these difficulties; hence the level of leadership involvement is crucial for the implementation of gender policies. In the same vein, Ledimo [18] opined that when leaders and management of institutions have an understanding of gender and issues of justice and fairness in organisations, they are able to enhance and improve their employees' perceptions of fairness and gender equity. Also Krook and Zetterberg [19] emphasized the need for management to set aside their personal biases in order to be objective in taking decisions about the roles of men and women and to be able to positively influence their subordinates' perception of fairness in terms of engaging in gender equality practices.

A major challenge faced in the implementation process of the university gender policy is from critics who feel that gender equality concerns should be the least priority in a university that is struggling to meet its financial obligations, hence implementing the gender policy as a top priority concern is unacceptable to many. Consequently, inadequate funding for gender equity issues and the university's inclination towards patriarchal tendencies which is embedded in the university system is a critical constraint to the implementation of the gender policy. Ledimo [18] observed that this gender bias sometimes stems from the lack of support from the highest levels of the institution which also manifests in the form of under resourcing, lack of commitment and not facilitating workshops and seminars and other developmental processes specified in the policy document. Hence, gendered power at play is a major barrier to the implementation of the gender policy.

This male-centric and norms as well as the masculine practices function to exclude women and make gender equity issues of less concern [20]. Morley [21] affirmed that the micro politics that excludes women in higher education is carried out through informal networks and conditions that is composed of men and entrenched in boardrooms or in committees and in "old boys' clubs or networks". These networks unite men and offer influential advantages and support among its members [22]. These invisible subtle resistance shrouded in the fabrics of the university is a challenge to the implementation of the policy.

The problem of lack of proper monitoring and evaluation of gender equity issues that is required for measuring the progress made and for reviewing the gender policy is a major implementation impediment. The Centre for Gender and Social Policy Studies of Obafemi Awolowo University that is mandated to carry out the monitoring and evaluation activities is unable to successfully do that due to lack of funds and support facilities (human and material). The Centre has not also been sufficiently strengthened to carry out the monitoring and evaluation activities needed to facilitate the implementation of the gender policy as proposed in the document [2].



Generally, there are set backs in the implementation of the gender policy in Obafemi Awolowo University, particularly in the aspects that border on advancing women into leadership positions. The full representation of women in leadership positions remain inconsistent. This implies that the unwillingness to engage with gender and make gender issues thrive and to be of high priority as evident in the gender policy has gradually become a mere policy rhetoric [20]. It is not surprising therefore that since the approval of the gender policy in 2009, not much has been done to facilitate its implementation to ensure a 70:30 male/Female ratio representation in decision-making positions.

Since the main purpose for initiating the policy is being eroded, this paper argues that the feminist theoretical perspective that perceive women as a marginalized and subordinated set due to patriarchy and male centric organizational structure is adopted as a framework for this study. Feminist theorists advocate against patriarchy, marginalization and subordination of women as well as emphasize the eradication of gender-based injustices [23]. They desire to rectify women's past invisibility and repudiate distortions, by making them visible and putting them where they have been left out [24]. They focus on ending the oppression of women by working towards their empowerment. Williams [25] noted that the various strands of feminist theories offer unique and vantage points into the lives of women which must be considered when initiating and implementing policies. For instance, existential feminist theorists value the capacity for radical change and are dedicated to exposing and undermining socially imposed gender roles and cultural constructs limiting women's self-determination. The feminist Marxists and Socialists draw attention to the fact that men are the beneficiaries of the exploitation of women. They see the expropriation of women's labour in the household as key to the explanation of women's subordination. They therefore advocate for the inclusion of strategies based on knowledge about what contributes to advance women to leadership positions into organizations [26]. Such intervention strategies which include training, mentoring and coaching programmes can be included in the university gender policy. Radical feminist theorists support this by advocating for change in organizations and the public world through a replacement of the existing gender roles with that which would be suitable for either sex. Feminism seeks the transformation of institutions and to deconstruct practices and assumptions that sustain gender inequality. The current male-centric leadership models and norms in the university have served to limit women's aspirations regarding leadership as well as their access to leadership roles. Hence, women's under representation in leadership positions in Obafemi Awolowo University is attributed to the existence of patriarchy and masculine practices as portrayed in the feminists orientation. The university gender policy has therefore not yielded much of the expected change. This paper argues for the need to illuminate the feminist perspective to successfully implement the university gender policy in Obafemi Awolowo University, Nigeria. This is because feminist theories provide analytical tools that reveal how policies should be driven and implemented. They also indicate the factors that should be considered to create a just and gender sensitive policy by providing approaches for destabilizing the traditional patriarchal and stereotypic practices that are inimical to the advancement and representation of women in institutions [27].

## METHODOLOGY

This study was carried out in Obafemi Awolowo University which is a federal university located in south western Nigeria. Nigeria is a Federal Republic located in West Africa and comprises of 36 states. It shares borders with the Republic of Benin in the West, Chad and Cameroun in the East, Niger in the North and the Atlantic Ocean in the South. Obafemi Awolowo University has a staff strength of 6,250 and student enrolment of over 26,000 [14]. It is made up of 13 Faculties, 95 Departments, 8 Research Institutes, a College of Health Sciences and a Postgraduate College.

This study adopted the survey research design and obtained its data from both primary and secondary sources. The primary data was derived from in depth interviews conducted with 20 purposively selected members of academic staff who are experienced in university management and have requisite knowledge about the background, promulgation and implementation process of the gender policy as well as its attendant challenges. These consisted of: 10 Heads of Departments, 3 Directors of Research Centres, 1 Deputy Vice –Chancellor and 6 Deans of Faculties.

The interviews were conducted face to face and through phone conversations. The questions enabled the respondents to express their views and provide a harmonizing insight about what the university had committed to do as outlined in the gender policy document in mainstreaming gender and in implementing the policy as well as the challenges that have acted as barriers to the process.

The results of the interviews were collated, thematized and reported using content analysis, while the results from the sex disaggregated data derived from the Planning, Budgeting and Monitoring Unit of the University were presented using simple percentages.

## THE RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

**Table 1:** Staff representation in academic leadership positions by gender, 2009 and 2013 to 2018 (Numbers in brackets represent percentages)

Positions	2009	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
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	Male (%)	Female (%)	Male (%)	Female (%)	Male (%)	Female (%)	Male (%)	Female (%)	Male (%)	Female (%)	Male (%)	Female (%)	Male (%)	Female (%)
Heads of Dept.	80(94.1)	5(5.9)	79(92.9)	6(7.1)	82(96.4)	3(3.5)	80(94.1)	5(5.9)	76(89.4)	9(10.6)	74(87.1)	11(12.9)	74(87.7)	11(12.9)
Deans	12(85.7)	2(14.3)	13(92.9)	1(7.1)	13(92.9)	1(7.1)	11(78.6)	3(21.4)	11(78.6)	3(21.4)	12(85.7)	2(14.3)	12(85.7)	2(14.3)
Directors	4(66.7)	2(33.3)	5(83.3)	1(16.7)	5(83.3)	1(16.7)	4(66.7)	2(33.3)	4(66.7)	2(33.3)	5(83.3)	1(16.7)	5(83.3)	1(16.7)
Provosts	2(100)	-	2(100)	-	2(100)	-	2(100)	-	2(100)	-	2(100)	-	1(50)	-
Librarian	1(100)	-	-	1(100)	-	1(100)	-	1(100)	-	1(100)	-	1(100)	-	1(100)
Vice-Chancellor	1(100)	-	1(100)	-	1(100)	-	1(100)	-	1(100)	-	1(100)	-	1(100)	-
Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic)	-	1(100)	-	1(100)	1(100)	-	1(100)	-	1(100)	-	1(100)	-	1(100)	-
Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Administration)	1(100)	-	1(100)	-	1(100)	-	1(100)	-	1(100)	-	1(100)	-	1(100)	-
University Council	15(71.4)	6(28.6)	18(85.7)	3(14.3)	18(85.7)	3(14.3)	17(80.5)	3(15)	17(80.5)	3(15)	16(76.1)	5(23.8)	16(76.1)	3(23.8)

Source: Planning, Monitoring and Budgeting Unit, OAU 2019

Table 1 shows the data on staff representation in academic leadership and decision making positions in the university by gender in 2009 when the university gender policy was promulgated and four years after in 2013 to 2018. An interval of four years after the enactment of the policy was chosen because it was sufficient to generate and accumulate empirical evidence to determine the processes of change in the representation of men and women in university leadership positions. Hence, it helped to determine whether or not there is improvement in the representation of women in decision making positions in the university. Data on the table reveals a slight increase in the number of female Heads of Department from 5.9 percent in 2009 to 7.3 percent in 2013. Their representation dropped in 2014 and 2015 to 3.5 percent and 5.9 percent respectively. The largest growth of females as Heads of Departments were however seen in 2016 (10.6%) 2017 (12.9%) and 2018 (12.9%) respectively. These increases were minimal and they were attributed to the positive effect of the gender policy. Generally however, the position of Head of Department remains male dominated since the inception of the Obafemi Awolowo University in 1962.

Furthermore, the table shows an undulating trend and pronounced underrepresentation of women as Deans in the university. Data on the table shows an initial decrease from 14.3% in 2009 to 7.1% in 2013 and 2014 respectively. Thereafter, there was a slight increase in 2015 (21.4%) and 2016 (21.4%) respectively, and a further down turn in 2017 (14.3%) and 2018 (14.3%) respectively. These results are indications that the position of Dean remains the exclusive reserve for males despite the existence of the gender policy. This is attributed to the fact that the professorial cadre is the major criteria for qualifying for the position. Although the gender policy advocates for an increased representation of women as Deans, the women must however first be qualified and possess the requisite qualification for the position. This implies that women are at a disadvantaged position because few of them are professors.

Data on the Table shows that not much change or increase has occurred in the representation of women as Directors. The Centre for Gender and Social Policy Studies from where the policy emanated and the Institute of Education are the only academic institutes out of over four other institutes in the university that have had female Directors.

It should be noted that the positions of Provost, Librarian and Vice-Chancellor have remained the exclusive reserve of males since, the inception of Obafemi Awolowo University. It was only until 2013 that the first and only female Librarian was appointed and in 2018 the first female professor was appointed as the Provost of the Postgraduate College.

The College of Health Sciences has never had a female provost even after the enactment of the gender policy. The table also shows that there has never been a female Vice-Chancellor, except for the position of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (academic) which was occupied by a female between 2009 and 2013.

The position of women in Council which is the highest decision making body of the university as reflected on the table dropped from 28.6% in 2009 to 14.3% in 2013 and 2014 respectively. There was a slight increase in their representation in Council between 2017 (23.8%) and 2018 (23.8%) respectively. Generally, the results show that although not much change has been recorded in female representation in Council, the slight increases has helped to remove the gender stereotype of the assumption that Council members must be men. In spite of this, women still need to learn how to lobby for political positions. The slight increases however, did not suffice in actualizing the 70:30 ratio of male and female membership in leadership positions proposed in the policy document. This implies that the “chilly climate” and “glass ceiling” exist despite the existence of the policy. The policy has not effectively brought about the transformation needed in advancing women into leadership and decision making positions and by implication has not been able to dismantle the patriarchal structure in the composition of staff in leadership positions. The results on the table corroborates that of kjeldat, Rindfleish and Sheridon [28] who found that despite the legislation in Australia over two decades ago, women are still underrepresented in senior academic positions. In view of this there is the need to have an understanding of the local conditions and dynamics operating in a particular university context, because the university system is complex and sometimes meanings, norms and practices are negotiated such that gender mainstreaming strategies would require changes.

**Table 2:** Number of Professors and members of university Senate by sex, 2009 to 2019 (Numbers in brackets represent percentages)

Year	Sex		Total
	Male	Female	
2009	211(97.2)	6(2.8)	217
2010	-	-	-
2011	208(93.3)	15(16.7)	223
2012	220(93.6)	15(6.4)	235
2013	238(93.3)	17(6.7)	255
2014	278(92.7)	22(7.3)	300
2015	334(92.8)	26(7.2)	360
2016	346(92.8)	27(7.2)	373
2017	373(93.2)	27(6.8)	400
2018	405(92.3)	34(7.7)	439

Source: Planning, Monitoring and Budgeting Unit, [14]

Table 2 shows the gender distribution of professors and members of the university Senate (which is the highest academic decision making body of the university) from 2009 to 2018, (data were not available for 2010). Figures on the table show that there exists a wide gap in the number of male and female Professors at Senate. For instance, in 2009 there were 211(97.2%) male Professors at Senate, as against just 6(2.7%) females. However, very slight improvements in the number of female Professors was observed from 15(6.7%) in 2011, 22(7.3%) in 2014, to 34(7.7%) in 2018. These increases were very minimal when compared with the number of their male counterparts. These slight improvements were not totally attributed to the implementation of the gender policy, rather they were as a result of women’s hard work and ability to publish and advance to the professorial cadre. It should be noted that although the policy advocates for an increase of women in decision making positions (such as the Senate), women are expected to work hard to possess the requisite qualifications to advance to such positions. Generally, results on the table reveal that the total number of women in Senate and decision making positions in the university are still far from expectation. It is imperative to have sufficient number of women in leadership positions because their presence has positive effects that improve organizational performance [29].

**Table 3:** Summary of interviewees’ responses on the implementation strategies of the Gender Policy.

Implementation Strategies	Responses
Achieve a 70:30 male and female ratio improvement in the appointment of headship positions	Majority of members in headship positions are still men. The number of females ought to increase with the existence of the policy. This implies that this policy objective is yet to be achieved.
Encourage better participation of women in elective positions by giving incentives to gender compliant faculties	The units that appointed more females into leadership positions did not receive any form of incentive from the university management. This aspect of the policy has not

	been implemented.
Ensure that all data emanating from departments and units are gender disaggregated	Data emanating from most departments and units are gender disaggregated and collected by the Planning, Budgeting and Monitoring unit of the university. The CGSPS was able to sensitize the PBM Unit at the enactment of the policy to collate all such data and the unit has continued to do this since then. This unit serves as a data base for the university for gender related issues. This aspect of the policy has been implemented.
Build the gender sensitivity of men and women occupying leadership positions in the university	There were fora for discussion and awareness creation of gender issues in the earlier years of the enactment of the policy. Currently, this has stopped and most members of staff are not aware of the existence of the gender policy nor do they apply its contents in their various units.
Appoint gender officer and focal persons in major administrative units to monitor the application of equity principles in the university	There were focal persons in all the faculties who monitored the implementation of the policy in their units from 2010 to 2014. Thereafter, none was appointed and since then the contents of the policy have not been adequately applied in running the various units, neither is the policy effectively monitored nor evaluated.
Strengthen the CGSPS and create appropriate committees to mainstream gender in the university system	The initial funds that supported the centre in organizing programmes, seminars, providing scholarships, etc were made possible by the Carnegie foundation. At the end of the agreement terms, the Centre has not had the requisite fund to effectively continue the implementation process and the university has not intervened in this regard. Hence not much has been done in recent time. The existing gender equity and gender implementation committees are not functional to drive the implementation process. However, the current university management is working towards resuscitating the committees. Generally, the centre has not been properly strengthened.

Table 3 shows the summary of the interviewees' responses on the implementation strategies of the university gender policy. The interviewees which consisted of the major stakeholders in the implementation of the policy were asked about their opinions on the extent to which the implementation strategies of the university gender policy has been achieved.

Result on the table shows that the university has not fully achieved a 70:30 male and female ratio representation in academic leadership positions. The respondents mainly attributed this to the underlying systemic factors in the university system that reinforce gender hierarchies, patriarchy and workplace inequity. They also attributed it to the biases against the policy, such that the patriarchal power embodied in the institution blocks the transformation towards a more inclusive institution. The gender bias is a limiting factor in actualizing and articulating the contents of the policy to promote equality in leadership positions. The faculties and units that have however recorded some increase in the number of females in decision making positions have not benefitted from the provision of incentives as stipulated in the gender document. Provision of incentives was built into the gender document as a motivating factor to encourage faculties to more gender sensitize. Farisaye[30] in support of this, reiterated the fact that incentives are necessary to encourage attention to gender equity in work environments.

The study found that the university has been able to ensure that data from its various units are gender disaggregated as stipulated in the Gender Policy Document. The Centre for Gender and Social Policy of the university in collaboration with the Planning, Budgeting and Monitoring Unit of the university facilitates this. This finding corroborates that of Aberson [31] who found that well documented empirical data and cooperation between groups is fundamental for the successful implementation of policies. This is also vital for understanding the context of gender and for monitoring and evaluating the success of the policy. The interviewees affirmed that this aspect of the implementation strategy has been largely achieved.



The table further shows that the aspect of the policy that focuses on building the gender sensitivity of men and women occupying leadership positions in the university has not been fully achieved. The interviewees from the Centre for Gender and Social Policy Studies, noted that the Centre in the earlier years of the enactment of the gender policy organized variety of awareness talks and fora to provide an understanding of gender issues and the application of the policy to various units of the university. This was necessary because a vast majority of the university community were ignorant of gender issues. In recent times, however, there has not been such talks and awareness programmes. The interviewees attributed this to lack of funds and interest from the university management in the policy document. They noted that funding is pivotal but were skeptical about the university's positive disposition to the implementation of the policy document which may be responsible for the poor allocation of funds for gender related issues.

Results on the table reveal that the appointment of gender officers and focal persons in major administrative units was not sustained. Hence, this aspect of the policy which is critical in the implementation process by ensuring that focal persons implement the policy in their respective units has not been fully implemented.

Finally, data on the table shows that the Centre for Gender and Social Policy Studies has not been adequately strengthened to implement the policy and the committees created to implement the policy has not been functional. It was only at the promulgation of the policy that the Centre was funded and empowered through the Carnegie foundation to engage in implementation activities but not much has been in that regard. However, the Centre currently runs postgraduate programmes in gender studies and provide enlightenment talks on sexual harassment issues to newly enrolled students and staff in the university.

The result on the table generally indicates that the enthusiasm that was put into the formulation of the policy has not been sustained and the policy is not currently widely known nor utilized within the university community.

### **Implementation Challenges of the University Gender Policy**

Further interviews were conducted with the stakeholders directly involved in the implementation of the policy and they were asked to provide information about the challenges encountered in the implementation process. The excerpts of their major opinions are presented below.

A former Director of the Centre for Gender and Social Policy Studies (CGSPS) noted that inadequate provision of funds by university management and poor fund generation by the Centre were the major challenges hindering the successful implementation of the policy. This challenge became glaring when the initial funds from Carnegie cooperation was exhausted and terminated.

The Director went further to say that:

*Fund is critical for the success of any policy. When the policy was newly initiated, the Centre for Gender and Social Policy studies was able to engage in the various implementation activities such as granting of scholarships, organization of training and empowerment workshops for academic and non-academic staff, etc. However, subsequent change in university management slowed down the sustenance of these activities due to funding issues and perhaps because of their lack of interest in gender related issues. The Center for Gender and Social Policy Studies cannot single handedly implement the policy, rather it is the responsibility of all stakeholders and members of the university community.*

This comment suggests that the university management lacks both funds and the political will to implement the policy. One of the male Heads of Departments interviewed corroborated this in his assertion below:

*Most Heads of Departments have no knowledge about this policy nor do they have copies of the document. I am privileged to know about it because I am a fellow of the Centre for Gender and Social Policy Studies and I assist the centre in carrying out specific assignments. The university management is neither proactive in popularizing the policy document nor its implementation. I think there is lack of interest, political will and less focus in promoting gender issues. If an interested set of management comes on board, I believe the policy would be brought to the lime light.*

Another female Head of Department affirmed the statement above by confirming that:

*The university lacks interest in the policy. I personally pushed for the implementation of the policy as a member of the gender Committee set up by the Academic Staff Union of Universities, by putting up a proposal to this effect. Unfortunately, the university management did not respond to my proposal.*

Majority of the interviewees observed that a major constraint to the implementation of the policy was the observed entrenched patriarchal conservatism and tendencies that pervade the university system. The university's decision making

positions are dominated by men who are indifferent to gender equity issues. In respect of this, a female Dean interviewed made this comment:

*Remember that males dominate the university system and they may not be comfortable with the contents of the policy and therefore not facilitate the implementation, so that women will remain subordinated. The African patriarchal tendency plays out in university administration such that issues that border on advancing women are not regarded as very important. Simply put .... men are not interested in this policy, so pushing for its implementation is slow and almost a non-issue.*

It should be noted that the responsibility of achieving gender equity through the implementation of the policy lies at every level of university management as well as in the commitment of all stakeholders.

The study found that the inability of the university to make the gender equity and gender implementation committees meant for the monitoring and implementation of the policy functional is a major implementation challenge. These committees whose members represent the sentinel site within the university administration are meant to serve as the gender caucus, for the purpose of achieving the objectives of the policy.

Generally, the interview excerpts have revealed the various challenges contending with the implementation of the gender policy. Institutionalizing the policy is absurd to many people, because they believe that gender concerns should be the least priority that university should commit funds to. The fact that the university gender policy has not translated to having a fair representation of women in academic leadership position is a major concern that should be addressed.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study evaluated the gender policy of the Obafemi Awolowo University Nigeria, by ascertaining the implementation challenges hindering it from achieving one of its major goal of advancing women into leadership positions and attain a 70:30 ratio of male and female participation. The study elicited the fact the policy has not been able to gain real traction in advancing academic women into leadership positions, rather the university reinforces systems of inequality and has not succeeded in making it a gender compliant institution. Areas of silence in the policy and the implementation process were attributed to an entrenched patriarchal culture that encourages male dominance, lack of political will and interest on the part of management as well as poor funding. Also, the exclusion of functional implementation and gender equity committees and focal groups were also dominant challenges and explanation for the policy's inability to achieve its goal.

Progressing women into leadership positions in the university is important because their presence contribute to positive and unique experiences that provide a diverse perspective on a variety of academic problems. They serve as agents of change for entrenching gender equality and for enhancing the quality of leadership through the transformational leadership style that they mostly adopt. The successful implementation of the gender policy and to ensure that it is effective and efficient requires the cooperation of all the stakeholders and the university community. Furthermore, it should be continuously monitored and evaluated to ensure continuity and not just a one-off project. It is essential that staff in management positions accept responsibility for entrenching gender equity practices that advance women into leadership positions in their various units and provide a report of the actual measures and projects undertaken to promote this on an annual basis. Also, funds should be made available by the university for the implementation of the policy. In the same vein, the Centre for Gender and Social Policy Studies should seek for more ways of generating funds to sustain the policy.

The study concluded that without embracing gender equity in the various units of the university system and in all the spheres of human endeavours and organizations, achieving sustainable development goals and transforming institutions to be gender responsive would be difficult and remain a mirage.

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